

Books For Teaching the Trait: IDEA DEVELOPMENT

All the Places to Love – Patricia MacLachlan
Animal Dads – Sneed B. Collard
Barefoot: Escape on the Underground – Pamela Duncan Edwards
Dear Mr. Blueberry – Simon James
Doctor DeSoto – William Steig
Flashy Fantastic Rain Forest Frogs – Dorothy Patent
Frog and Toad Are Friends – Arnold Lobel
A Girl From Yamhill: A Memoir – Beverly Cleary
Hottest, Coldest, Highest, Deepest – Steve Jenkins
Mirandy and Brother Wind – Pat McKisack
Miss Rumphius – Barbara Cooney
The Mysteries of Harris Burdick – Chris Van Allsburg
Pete's a Pizza – William Steig
Roxaboxen – Alice McLerran
A Short Walk Around the Pyramids and Through the World of Art –
Phillip Isaacson
Snowflake Bentley – Jacqueline Briggsbook Martin
Wilifrid Gordon McDonald Partridge – Mem Fox
Window – Jeannie Baker

Questions Parents Can Ask

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct their attention to IDEAS and CONTENT are:

Is my message clear?

Do I know enough about my TOPIC?

Did I make the topic interesting with DETAILS?

Is my topic the right FOCUS(not too large or too small)?

Did I SHOW what was happening rather than just TELL?

Other Ways Parents Can Help

Helping your children understand about IDEAS and CONTENT can involve more than just pencil and paper activities. Take advantage of everyday situations that help them THINK like great writers.

Help your children become GOOD OBSERVERS. When you are out-and-about, ask them to make observations about what they see; look for the less-than-obvious; people watch; comment on things people in a rush might miss. Improving these observation skills makes it easier to generate ideas when brainstorming(rewriting) and writing.

Writing Activities

These lessons can be used to introduce or enhance the six traits and help students gain confidence as writers.

1. Write and illustrate sentence pyramids. This is a good exercise for adding details and expanding a thought.

I saw a clown.

I saw a funny clown.

I saw a funny clown juggling.

I saw a funny clown juggling bowling pins.

I saw a funny clown juggling bowling pins in a parade.

I saw a funny clown juggling bowling pins in a Christmas parade.

2. Have your child cut out and decorate a t-shirt or another article of clothing. Write a story describing a day in its life.

3. Read When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant, an exceptional model for writing memories. Ask your child to think of specific events to write and illustrate.

When I used to live in... (When we lived in...)

When I was in the Second Grade...

When I was in Mrs. _____'s room...

When we went to visit...

4. Read The Important Book by Margaret Wise Brown. The pattern is an easy one. Let your child create a book about something that is important to him: family member, pet, friend. The first line identifies the object and tells why it is important. The next three lines describe the object.

5. Give your child a piece of paper and have him fold it in half. Have him choose one below writing and illustrating the first part on the left side and the second part on the right side.

I used to be _____, but now I'm _____.

I seem to be _____, but really I'm _____.

I'm good at _____, but I'm not so good at _____.

6. Read If the Dinosaurs Came Back by Bernard Most. Have your child draw his own dinosaur then write a about ways he could use it.
7. Have your child draw a self-portrait as he looks today but tell him to dress for his chosen profession when he is an adult. He can include some background that indicates his workplace. Have him write about where he will go to school and how he will prepare himself for this job.
8. Read "The Toucan" by Shel Silverstein, found in Where the Sidewalk Ends. Talk about the pattern of the poem with your child. Have your child make up additional lines and add them to the poem.
9. Read When I Was Young: Memoirs of a Four Year Old by Jaime Lee Curtis. Four pages is enough to have a title page and relate/draw three memories of what life was like when he was younger.
10. Have your child write and illustrate a poem comparing himself to different things such as a car, piece of furniture, animal, fruit or vegetable. Metaphors connect two different ideas, persons, places or things. They make you see things in new ways. Metaphors do not use "like" or "as" – similes do that. Here is an example:
In the morning, I am a bear.
Grouchy in my cave of sheets and pillows.
Growling at the ringing of the alarm clock.
Swatting at the button to make it stop.